PRAYER AND INTELLIGENCE

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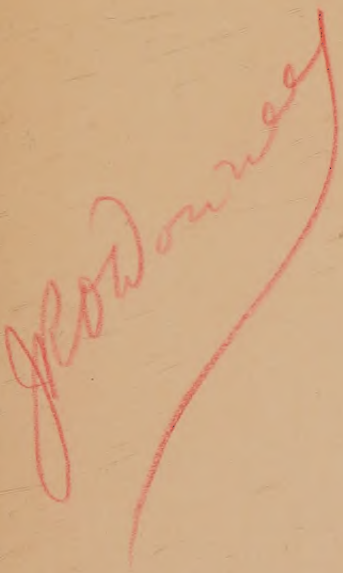

PRAYER AND INTELLIGENCE

PRAYER AND INTELLIGENCE,
BEING *LA VIE D'ORAISON* OF
JACQUES AND RAÏSSA MARITAIN
TRANSLATED BY ALGAR THOROLD

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This little book (of which the first edition, privately printed and restricted in number, was produced in 1922 at S. Maurice d'Agaune with the *imprimatur* of Mgr. Marietan, Bishop of Bethlehem) in no way claims to take the place of a treatise of spirituality, or even to serve as an introduction to the most elementary of such works.

It is but an attempt to disentangle and state as clearly as possible, in the spirit of Christian tradition and of S. Thomas, the main directions which seem suitable to the spiritual life of persons living in the world and occupied in intellectual pursuits.

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SAPIENTIA QVAE EX ORE ALTISSIMI
RODIISTI, ATTINGENS A FINE VSQVE
D FINEM, FORTITER SVAVITERQVE
ISPONENS OMNIA : VENI AD DOCENDVM
OS VIAM PRVDENTIAE.

". . . After the death of the Doctor, Brother Reginald, having returned to Naples and resumed his lectures, exclaimed with many tears: My brothers, while he was still in life, my Master forbade me to disclose the admirable things concerning him whereof I had been witness. One of these things was that he had acquired his science not by human industry, but by the merit of prayer, for whenever he wished to study, discuss, read, write or dictate, he first had recourse to prayer in private, and poured forth his soul with tears in order to discover the divine secrets, and by the merits of this prayer his doubts were removed and he issued therefrom fully instructed. . . ."

(Peter Calo. *Vita sancti Thomae Aquinatis.*)

I

OF SACRED DOCTRINE

I

OF SACRED DOCTRINE

1. VERBVM SPIRANS AMOREM

In us as well as in God, love must proceed from the Word, that is from the spiritual possession of the truth, in Faith.

And just as everything which is in the Word is found once more in the Holy Spirit, so must all that we know pass into our power of affection by love, there only finding its resting-place.

Love must proceed from Truth, and Knowledge must bear fruit in love.

Our prayer is not what it ought to be, if either of these conditions is wanting.

And by prayer we understand no other thing than that supreme prayer which is made in the secret depth of the heart—in so far as it is directed to contemplation and union with God.

2. ET PAX DEI,
QVAE EXSVPERAT OMNEM SENSVM,
CVSTODIAT INTELLIGENTIAS VESTRAS

The soul in order to arrive at her last end must act, whether she make use of her own activity aided by Grace, or whether God reserve to himself the initiative of moving her, of placing her

in the state which we call passive because the activity of the soul when placed in it, although in reality raised above itself,[1] is characterised by its complete dependence on the Divine Action, and the suspension of its human method of production. Until God shall introduce us into his repose, we should ourselves make use of all our faculties with a view to our sanctification and that of our neighbour. "O Love, O God!" cries S. Gertrude, "he who is courageous and alert in the labour of thy love, will keep himself continually before thy Royal Face."

We must therefore consecrate the whole effort of our intelligence, as of our

[1] Cf. *Sum. Theol.*, I, ii, 68, 3, obj. 2 *et ad* 2. S. Thomas, having laid down that "the gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect man, *to the extent to which he is moved by the Spirit of God*," and that "man in so far as he is moved to act by the Spirit of God, becomes in a certain sense, an *instrument* of God," remarks that "non-intellectual substances considered as instruments have not the faculty of action but only of being moved"; and adds: "But man is not an instrument of this kind; for *he is moved by the Holy Spirit in the same manner as that in which he acts* as a creature endowed with free will, *sicut agitur a Spiritu Sancto quod etiam agit, in quantum est liberi arbitrii*."

will, to know and love God, to make him known and loved.

But the intelligence itself can only develop its highest powers in so far as it is protected and fortified by the peace given by prayer. The closer a soul approaches God by love, the simpler grows the gaze of her intelligence and the clearer her vision.

"*None*," says Tauler, "*understand better the nature of real distinction than those who have entered into Unity.*" But no one enters into Unity save by Love.

There is, further, a special relation between the intellectual life and the life of prayer in this sense, that prayer demands of the soul that she should leave the region of sensory images for the sphere of the Pure Intelligible and what lies beyond, while the operation of the intelligence grows more perfect in proportion to its emancipation from sensory images.[1]

The life of prayer, also, alone enables us to unite to a never-waning, never-failing, absolute fidelity to truth, a

[1] *Sum. Theol.*, II, ii, 15, 3. Cf. in *Boet. de Trinitate* 9. 6. a. 2.

great charity—in particular a great intellectual charity—towards our neighbour. Finally, the life of prayer, alone, by supernaturally rectifying our faculties of desire enables us to convert the truth into practice.

3. SINT LVCERNAE ARDENTES IN MANIBVS VESTRIS

Prayer, particularly in the case of intellectuals, can only preserve a perfectly right direction and escape the dangers which threaten it, on condition of being supported and fed by Theology.

Knowledge of the Sacred Doctrine has a peculiar tendency of its own to shorten and render safer the spiritual journey. It saves the soul from a number of errors, illusions and blind alleys. In relation to the purgative life, it possesses an ascetic virtue which succeeds in detaching the soul from the degradations and trivialities of self-love. As for those living the illuminative life, the purification that it brings simplifies the gaze of the soul and turns it from the human self to God alone. And finally, in relation to the unitive life, a knowledge of Theology plants the roots of the soul deep in Faith

and the divine Truth, a predisposition essentially required for the life of union with God.

No doubt, Charity comes before everything. It is better, here below, to love God than to know him. It is his pleasure sometimes to raise the most ignorant to the sublimest contemplation, and on account of our perversity and vanity, knowledge is often an obstacle to the Holy Spirit. It would, however, be imprudent and rash to expect a gratuitous infusion of the doctrinal light which it is in our power to acquire by study—apart from the fact that the intellectually vitiated atmosphere of the modern world needs a general recourse to theological science. In conclusion we may say that the normal method for those who have the grace to lead these two lives together is to unite the life of the intelligence to that of Charity on a basis of mutual inter-aid, on condition, however, that they thoroughly understand that the latter is worth infinitely more than the former, and that they always hold themselves ready to abandon all for the sake of divine love.

II

OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

4. ESTOTE PERFECTI

This is the call of love, to which nothing but love can reply. It is the Lord's call to the greatest possible conformity to the divine pattern. "What is sweeter, dear brethren, than the voice of the Lord calling us? Behold, the Lord in his goodness, himself shows us the path of life." (Prologue to the *Rule of S. Benedict*.)

If we would make progress in this path, we must decide, whatever be our vocation, to give ourselves to God without reserve. "All that is necessary is the renunciation once for all of all our interests and satisfactions, all our designs and projects so as to depend henceforth solely on the good pleasure of God." This is what Père Lallemant calls "*crossing the ditch*" (*Spiritual Doctrine*).

At this cost we shall taste and see how sweet the Lord is and how light is his yoke. "All is light for thee who hast submitted with a willing heart." (Gerlac Peters. *The Burning Soliloquy*.)

At this cost the faithful soul has the right to hope that after her purification in the Night of the Senses and the Night of the Spirit, when she shall have "died the death of angels" (St. Bernard *in Cantic.*, serm. 82), she shall be led from brightness to brightness up to perfect union with God. Transformed in him, she will then be able to say with S. Paul: "I no longer live, it is Christ who lives in me."

5. CARITAS VINCVLVM PERFECTIONIS

Christian perfection consists essentially in charity (*Sum. Theol.*, II, ii, 184, 3). A thing, indeed, is called perfect in so far as it attains its proper end—for the proper end of a thing is its ultimate perfection. Now it is charity that unites us to God who is the last end of the human soul: "*Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo*" (184, 1).

It follows that perfection falls under the divine precept, for it is with charity, with the double Love of God and our neighbour—in the first place of God, in the second, of our neighbour—that the two precepts of the divine Law are concerned. "Now the love of God and of

the neighbour does not fall under the precept in a certain, definite measure or up to a certain extent only, so that any excess of the virtue would belong to the counsel (of perfection): this is evident from the very form of the precept which implies perfection and totality: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This is why the Apostle says (1 Tim., 1): "The end of the precept is charity, *finis praecepti caritas est.*" The end admits of no measure which is concerned with the means only. The physician does not measure the degree up to which he will cure the patient, but he does measure the remedies and the diet he prescribes in order to accomplish the cure" (184, 3). Thus the measure with which God should be loved is to love him without measure, *modus diligendi sine modo diligere.* (S. Bernard. *De diligendo Deo.*)

But there are various degrees in charity or perfection—that is to say, more or less perfect *ways* in which the precept may be fulfilled. "And since what falls under the precept may be

accomplished in different ways, it is not necessary to fulfil it in the best way in order not to sin against it; to avoid its transgression it is sufficient that it be accomplished in one way or other (184, 3 ad 2).

Therefore "Christian perfection, that is all degrees of charity—even that supreme degree that is only realised in Patria—falls under the precept," although the degrees higher than the lowest are concerned not with the substance of the precept but with the manner of its accomplishment, and are commanded not as something to be immediately realised but as the end towards which we must advance, *si non ut materia saltem ut finis*.[1]

"The lowest degree of divine love is

[1] Cajetan, in II, ii, 184, 3, says on this subject: "The perfection of Charity is commanded as an end (*praecipitur ut finis*), we must wish to reach the end, the whole end, but precisely because it is an end, it is sufficient not to transgress the precept that we should be in the state to attain that perfection one day, even if only in eternity. Whoever possesses even the feeblest degree of charity and is thus on his road to Heaven, is walking in the way of perfect charity, and consequently avoids the transgression of the precept, the fulfilment of which is necessary for salvation."

to love nothing more than God, nothing contrary to God, nothing as much as God. He who does not reach this degree of Christian perfection in no way accomplishes the precept." (*Ibid.*) He who does not in his practice surpass it accomplishes the precept imperfectly. It is only in Heaven, where the soul set free from the conditions of the present life sees God face to face, that the precept is accomplished quite perfectly. As for the degree of the perfection compatible with the present life, it demands "the exclusion of everything repugnant to the movement of love towards God. This is realised when a man excludes from his affection not only everything incompatible with the existence of charity such as mortal sin, but also everything which prevents the affection of the soul being directed wholly upon God, *quod impedit ne affectus mentis totaliter dirigatur ad Deum*" (184, 2). In this degree of charity, man loves himself only in and for God; all servile fear has been driven out, and there remains in his heart filial fear alone, which is the first effect produced by Wisdom. (II, ii, 19, 6, 7, 8.)

That is the goal to which Love calls us here below.

The evangelical counsels are concerned with the means, but with nothing but the means, of attaining this goal. "They are systematically determined precisely with a view to the elimination of what without being incompatible with the existence of charity is nevertheless a hindrance to its characteristic exercise." They are not themselves perfection, but its instruments; for perfection consisting essentially in charity and in the precepts, it "is only in a secondary and instrumental way that it consists in the counsels." (184, 3.) Nevertheless, the pursuit of the end implies the use of means suitable to the diverse circumstances in which Divine Providence may have placed us. It thus becomes evident that while perfection in the accomplishment of the precept of charity does not require, necessarily and for all, the religious state, yet supposes at least a spiritual practice, adapted to each man's state of life, of the evangelical counsels and their corresponding *preparation of soul*.

Whatever be the vocation of each of us, we are all concerned with that word of S. John of the Cross: "*When the evening of this life comes, you will be judged on love.*"

6. MIHI AVTEM ADHAERERE DEO BONVM EST

The supreme means of attaining the perfection of charity and its exercise—a means indeed not disjoined from that end—is divine contemplation, or union with God through an experimental, loving and ineffable knowledge of him, which we may all desire to receive from his Grace, and particularly through the assiduous practice of prayer.

"*Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus.*" (Ps. 45.)

How shall a man attain to the perfection of Charity, if he does not keep himself habitually in the presence of God, and has not the attention of his whole soul fixed on him and primarily on Jesus Crucified in such a way as to "pass through the wounds of his Humanity into the intimacy of the Divinity"? (*De adhaerendo Deo.* John of Castel. cap. 2.) This is just the right way to practise

prayer and to pray without ceasing. *Semper orate.*

Those who are engaged in the active life should not renounce contemplation on the ground that they are not contemplatives. On the contrary, they have a further reason for being attached to contemplation, a more pressing need of prayer. If it should happen that the conditions of their life render access to the highest forms of contemplation more difficult, the substance of contemplation will not be denied them on that account; and they should ask of the divine mercy the grace of a sufficient intensity of interior life for their very activity, at least in its mode of production, to proceed from the superabundance of their contemplation, *ex superabundantia contemplationis.*

" It is true that the occupations of the active life sometimes turn us away from contemplation. . ." but they certainly do not do so completely. " The love of the truth," writes S. Augustine, " seeks a holy repose, the necessity which love imposes accepts justified toil, *otium sanctum quaerit caritas veritatis, negotium*

justum suscipit necessitas caritatis. If no duty be imposed on us, let us be busy with the study and contemplation of truth; and if labours are laid on us, charity itself obliges us to accept them. Even so, however, the sweet contemplation of truth should not be abandoned, for fear that with the disappearance of that sweetness, we should be overwhelmed by our necessities." From which it clearly results that when a man is called from a contemplative to an active life, his vocation does not come by way of subtraction, but rather by that of addition: "*non hoc fit per modum subtractionis, sed per modum additionis.*" (II, ii, 182, 1 ad 3.)

7. QVI SPIRITV DEI AGVNTVR II SVNT FILII DEI

Contemplation, in the same way as what is called more in general the mystical life, depends essentially on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and on the divine mode of action which they communicate to man.[1] Theologians tell us

[1] The characteristic of the Gift of Wisdom, wrote S. Maximus in the seventh century, is to procure an incomprehensible union with God, which in those who are worthy satisfies ardent desire with

that the spiritual man is he who lives habitually under the rule of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. And although, in one case or another, this or that gift may be manifested in a predominant fashion, the gift of Wisdom, which is the highest of all—itself being properly speaking the gift of contemplation—must always in some way rule the contemplative, whether by completely dominating and drawing to itself everything in his nature (and in that case causing the soul to live in accordance with the pure and typical forms of the contemplative States), or by at least spreading its superior influence over the whole activity of the soul, thus giving him a more or less advanced participation in mystical contemplation.

Contemplation is thus the domain of the liberty of the Spirit who breathes where he wills and no man knows whence he comes or whither he goes. And it implies that the soul advancing in renunciation and detachment submits with docility to the Spirit's guidance.

enjoyment, makes of man a God by participation, and renders him capable of explaining to those who need it the mysteries of God and the divine beatitude.

Contemplation is the fruit of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul and of the invisible mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.[1] *Si quis diligit me, ad eum veniemus, et mansionem apud eum faciemus.*

It raises man to a knowledge and love of God which are all spiritual, *in spiritu et veritate*, stripped of the sensible and the human, transcending the order of images and ideas and therefore incomprehensible and ineffable, and introducing the soul into the luminous cloud of divine things : *nubes lucida obumbravit eos.*

Contemplation may be dry and painful. Serious advance is indeed impossible without passing one way or another through the purification of the *Nights.*

It is to Jesus Crucified, our Head, that contemplation tends to conform us ; the fruit of Wisdom is gathered on the tree of the Cross. The Sanctifying Spirit is also the Sacrificing Spirit.

Finally, contemplation should not be loved for its own sake but for God's. Not the joys of contemplation, but union with God through love—*that* is our end.

[1] See Note I, Part III.

Unless we abstain entirely from seeking extraordinary graces and lights—which in themselves are foreign to the essence of contemplation—and unless we direct very purely to *God alone* our desire of contemplation itself and its joys, which S. Bernard called "the paradise of interior delights," we shall not truly advance in the way of the Spirit.[1]

It is important at this point that we should thoroughly understand how Christian contemplation is situated, with a far better right than the contemplation of philosophers, at the height of the spirit, and how nevertheless it only attains this supremacy because, contrariwise to the contemplation of philosophers, it is above all the work of love.

Christian contemplation is the fruit of the gift of Wisdom; and this gift, although a *habitus* of the intelligence (thus maintaining its intellectual character in the order of being, attributed by S. Thomas to the contemplative life), depends essentially on charity, and consequently on sanctifying grace, and causes us to know God by a sort of

[1] See Note II, Part III.

connaturality—in an affective, experimental and obscure manner, because superior to every concept and image.[1] "It is in virtue of the gift which God makes us of himself and of the experimental union of love that mystical wisdom attains the knowledge of divine things, which are united more closely to us, more immediately felt and tasted by us by means of love, and make us perceive that what is thus felt in the affection is higher and more excellent than all considerations based on the knowing faculties alone."[2] Thus mysti-

[1] "God in the same act communicates at once both light and love: it is a supernatural knowledge of love which we may compare to a hot light. . . . This light remains, however, confused and obscure, for the knowledge proper to contemplation is according to S. Denys a ray of darkness for the intelligence." (S. John of the Cross. *Living Flame of Love*, III, 3.)

[2] John of S. Thomas, *Curs. Theol.*, Vol. VI, 9, lxx, disp. 18, a. 4. § ix and xv.—Cf. *Ibid.* § xiv: "Faith attains God in obscurity, remaining as it were at a certain distance from him in so far as Faith is belief in that which is not seen. But charity attains God immediately in Himself, making an intimate union precisely with that which is concealed in Faith. And thus, although Faith regulates love and union with God in so far as it proposes the object to the will; nevertheless, in virtue of the union by which love adheres immediately to God, the intelligence is moved by the affective experience

cal contemplation penetrates and secretly tastes divine things in Faith, *by the very virtue of the love* which makes us one spirit with God. *Qui adhaeret Deo, unus spiritus est.* (1 Cor. vi, 17.) And contemplation is always ordained towards love, for *love is more unifying than knowledge* (I, ii, 28, 1 ad 3.), at least than any knowledge outside the Beatific Vision.

Once more it will not be useless to note that while theology by its teaching concerning the gift of Wisdom enables us to know the spiritual organism of contemplation in an ontological manner, it leaves to the mystics the description of the corresponding psychological signs (phenomena); it would in fact be incorrect that the truths established by a superior science like Theology should serve by themselves as utilisable criteria of the art of the Spirit in practice. From

of the soul to judge of divine things in a higher fashion than belongs to the obscurity of Faith as such, because it *penetrates* the things of Faith and knows that *there is more hidden there* than Faith itself can manifest. It finds more to love and savour in love, and it is precisely by means of this hidden plus-value discovered by love that it judges divine things in a higher manner, under a special influence of the Holy Spirit."

this point of view it would seem that what usually happens, and above all at the beginning of the mystical way, is that the "superhuman mode of action" proper to the Gifts is translated in our experience in terms of the death and darkness which overwhelm our faculties, in other words, of the cessation of our human mode of action.[1]

In any case the cessation of all intellectual operations noted by S. John of the Cross following S. Denys, which, in their view, appears to characterise mystical contemplation, should be understood of the human mode only of those operations, for infused contemplation gives the intelligence, passive under the action of God, an increase of divine life which may transcend the experience of our senses, but which, nevertheless, plants deep in the intelligence the truth, and "in virtue of union" leads finally through ignorance to a knowledge more perfect than any distinct intellectual operation (Denys, *Divine Names*, VII, 3)—a knowledge,

[1] What S. Thomas says of the limping of Jacob may have a certain application here. (II, ii, 180, 7 ad 4.)

indeed, entirely out of proportion with what we call knowledge on the plane of our senses and reason (see Note III, p. 51).

8. AVERTE OCVLOS MEOS
NE VIDEANT VANITATEM

It is absolutely necessary to shun as the most pernicious of vices the reflex action of the mind, the tendency to come back on ourselves. This evil is very frequent among moderns who are born with a taste for analysis and psychological curiosity. If we look at ourselves instead of looking at God, if we tighten our heart in order to scrutinise the state of our soul and take stock of our petty progress, if we leave our prayer in order to find out if it is good, or abandon our "quietude to see if it is really quiet," as S. Francis de Sales says (*Amour de Dieu*, VI, 10), and agreeing with the descriptions of spiritual writers we lose the whole fruit of our spiritual life, we wander disquieted instead of entering into peace, we take the risk of numberless illusions. We must indeed examine ourselves, but under the eye of God and in order to bewail our faults before him, not to give ourselves the fallacious

pleasure of thinking that we securely possess all the ranges of our being and are building by ourselves the edifice of our own perfection. Here if ever is where we should say: *he who loses his soul*—i.e. who commits it wholly into the hands of God—*shall save it*. What is demanded of us is, as S. Catherine of Siena taught us, to act manfully, to hate ourselves and to desire God without measure.

Spiritual books do us good because they show us the end to pursue and the means of attaining it, but we should be misusing them if we employed them for the purpose of satisfying our curiosity to know precisely what floor or staircase we have reached in the castle of the Soul. That is for God to judge. And if it is true that the knowledge of what the Lord deigns to perform in us may be a most useful encouragement for our weakness, it is no less true that such knowledge will only profit us if we receive it with a great detachment and a complete absence of self-centred curiosity. "The prayer is not perfect if the monk knows he is praying," said S. Anthony Abbat.

And S. Hildegarde : " I ignore myself completely in body and soul, I count myself for nothing ; I turn to the living God and leave all these things to him so that he who has neither beginning nor end may condescend in all things to keep me from evil."

S. Gertrude, when the Lord offers her illness in one hand and health in the other, does not pause to choose between them, and goes straight to the heart of Jesus.

" What do my tastes matter, O Lord," cries S. Teresa, " for me there is nothing more than thyself."

" Nought but thyself," replies S. Thomas to Christ, who asks him what reward he would have.

This absence of any return on oneself, this very pure desire of God alone, is the essential condition of contemplation.

9. IN OMNIBVS REQVIEM QVAESIVI, ET IN HAEREDITATE DOMINI MORABOR

In order to understand the fundamental rôle which contemplation should play in our life, let us read once more what S. Thomas says of the contemplative life. He speaks of it in a purely formal way which would apply as

well to philosophical contemplation as to Christian or mystical contemplation. That he is primarily dealing with the latter is shown by his constant anxiety to rise from the thought of Aristotle to the witness of the Gospels and the Saints.

"The contemplative life," says S. Thomas, "consists in a sort of leisure, a repose" (*Sum. Theol.* II, ii; 182, 1. 3), "a liberty of spirit" in which man "burns with a desire of seeing the beauty of God," and offers to him "his soul in sacrifice," it has its beginning and end in love, it is "directly and immediately concerned with the love of God himself, "it is ordained not to any kind of love of God, but to the perfect love of Him" and constitutes in a certain sense a commencement of beatitude, *quaedam in choatio beatitudinis, quae hic incipit, ut in futuro continuetur* (180, 4; 182, 2).

"Absolutely speaking and in itself, the contemplative life is better than the active. The Philosopher proves this by eight reasons." (Ethic. x, 7 and 8.)

(1) The contemplative life is suitable to man in regard to his most perfect possession, the intellect, and in relation

to the proper objects of that faculty, namely the intelligibles, while the active life is concerned with exterior things. Wherefore the name of Rachel, who represents the contemplative life, means the *vision of the principle*, the active life being represented by Lia, who suffered from weak eyes. Thus S. Gregory. (Mor. VI, 18).

(2) The contemplative life can be more continuous (though this continuity cannot be referred to the supreme act of contemplation); this is why Mary, who symbolises contemplative life, is shewn us as always at the feet of the Lord.

(3) The delectation of the contemplative life is greater than that of the active; this is the meaning of S. Augustine's saying that "Martha was worried while Mary was feasting."

(4) In the contemplative life man is more self-sufficient, for he depends in this exercise less on external things; wherefore it is said in Luke IV, "Martha, Martha, thou art troubled and worried about many things."

(5) The contemplative life is loved for its own sake, while the active is

ordained to something beyond itself; wherefore it is said in Ps. 26, *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitae meae, ut videam voluptatem Domini.*

(6) The contemplative life consists in a sort of holy leisure and repose (*in quâdam vacatione et quiete*), which is why we read in the 45th Psalm: *Vacate et videte quia Ego sum Deus.*

(7) The contemplative life is related to divine things, and the active to human things; which is why S. Augustine says in the book *De Verbis Domini:* "In the beginning was the Word, this is he to whom Mary listened; and the Word was made Flesh, this is he whom Martha served."

(8) The contemplative life is related to what is specifically proper to man, that is, the intellect, while the lower forces common to human and to animal life take part in the operations of the active life. Which is why the Psalmist after having said: "*Homines et jumenta salvabis Domine,*" adds with special reference to men: "*in lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*" (Ps. 25.)

The ninth reason is given by the Lord when he says (Luke x, 42): "*Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her.*" S. Augustine explains this in the book *De Verbis Domini* by saying: "It is not that your part is bad, but that hers is better. How better? Because it will never be taken from her. For one day this burden imposed by necessity will be removed from you, but the sweetness of the truth is eternal. *Æterna est dulcedo veritatis.*" (II, ii, 182, 1.)

The contemplative life is then better than the active and when it superabounds and flows over into the apostolate is purely and simply the most perfect state of life (188, 6). And the contemplation of God, being at the summit of the Christian life, is not a means towards the moral virtues and the works of the active life, it is on the contrary the end towards which they are ordained as means and dispositions.

"The moral virtues are related to the contemplative life as dispositions towards it." (II, ii, 180, 2.)

"The moral virtues dispose the soul

for the contemplative life by producing peace and purity." (180, 2 ad 2. Cf. 1, ad 2; 4.)

And S. Thomas says that the virtue of Prudence "is in the service of Wisdom as the porter in the service of the King" (I, ii, 66, 5 ad 1). We cannot do without the service of this porter. Without the exercise of the moral virtues, without a radical detachment from created things, and without extreme care to maintain the peace and purity of the soul so as to follow the impulses of the Holy Spirit, we shall never make much progress in prayer and contemplation.

Contemplation itself, however, if we are men of goodwill, is the most powerful stimulus of progress in virtue, and without it our growth will be but slow and imperfect. "Without contemplation, no great advance will be made in virtue and we shall never be able to help others towards it. Without contemplation we shall never completely abandon our weaknesses and imperfections. We shall always remain attached to the earth and we shall never rise much above the sentiments of human nature. Never

shall we be able to give God a perfect service. With contemplation, we shall do more for ourselves and others in one month, than we shall do without it in ten years." (Père Lallemant. *Spiritual Doctrine.*)

"In my opinion," says S. Teresa, "we should grow more in virtue (humility) by contemplating the divine Perfections, than by keeping the eyes of our soul fixed on the vile clay of our origin. . . . The best method of acquiring self-knowledge is to apply ourselves to the knowledge of God. His greatness makes us see our lowliness, his purity reveals our stains, and his humility shows us how far we are from being humble. We draw two advantages from this practice: one, a clearer vision of our own nothingness in contrast to the divine grandeur . . . the other, that our intelligence and our will become ennobled and capable of every kind of good." (*The Interior Castle*, 1*st Mansion*, ch. ii.)

10. QVIS VOLENS TVRRIM AEDIFICARE NON PRIVS SEDENS COMPVTAT SVMPTVS

In order to advance in the spiritual life and dispose ourselves to receive the

grace of contemplation, we must use the means proposed to us by the Church. The assiduous frequentation of the sacraments, the love of the Holy Eucharist and frequent communion, devotion to the Holy Spirit, a filial and constant recourse to the Divine Heart of Jesus and to Mary, the Blessed Virgin, through whom all grace comes to us, that sweet humility which is the dawn of beatitude —*incipit beatitudo ab humilitate*—devotion to the Saints and Angels, spiritual and bodily penance, a holy hatred of self, perseverance in prayer—all these things are necessary ; there is no need to insist on such obvious truths.

We will merely say a few words on the importance of the Liturgy. To unite ourselves as closely as possible to the Church's prayer and her hieratic life, abandoning our soul to her divine influences is a very sure way which purifies the heart, illuminates the spirit and disposes us to the contemplative life by introducing us into the interior states of Christ. " The graces of prayer and the mystical states have their type and source in the hieratic life of the Church, they

refract in the members the light of the Image of Christ which exists perfectly in his Body." (Clerissac. *Le Mystère de l'Église.*)

The study of the Sacred Doctrine and of Holy Scripture is also a normally necessary means of the attainment of contemplation. This is what the ancients called, with S. Benedict, *lectio divina.* "It is no mere cold and abstract speculation, it is not an affair of simply human curiosity or of superficial reading, it is a serious, profound and persevering research into Truth itself. It is informed by prayer and tenderness. It is called *lectio*, and it is but the first degree of an ascending scale: *lectio*, *cogitatio*, *studium*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*; but S. Benedict knew well that in the case of a loyal and courageous soul the others would in their turn be added . . . The method of prayer of the ancients was simple and easy: it consisted in self-forgetfulness and living in habitual recollection, in assiduously steeping their souls in the beauty of the mysterious, in taking an interest in all the aspects of the supernatural economy following

the inspiration of that Spirit of God who alone can teach us to pray. For sixteen centuries clerics, religious, and faithful knew no other method of communication with God than this free pouring forth of their souls before him and this *lectio divina* which at once implied and nourished the life of prayer and in fact was almost identical with it." (Dom Delatte. *Commentary on the Rule of S. Benedict.*)

This does not mean to say that the ancients did not consecrate to mental prayer as such (the place of which could not be taken by liturgical prayer and habitual recollection) hours in which their *lectio* and psalmody were prolonged in an intimate commerce with God. But in our day of " dissipation " and feverish activity, it has become indispensable to reserve in a more definite fashion the time we give to mental prayer, which should be as largely measured as the duties of our state permit. It is probable that many souls deprive themselves of the choice graces of higher states of prayer because they are unable to sacrifice themselves with the requisite gener-

osity to the exigencies of this heart to heart communion with God.

"Mental prayer should take precedence of every other occupation; it is the force of the soul." (S. John of the Cross.)

"There is but one road which reaches God, and that is prayer; if anyone shows you another, you are being deceived." (S. Teresa.)

Apart from this, we must insist on the very great utility of ejaculatory prayers, the habitual use of which enables the soul to retain the presence of God, and partly compensates for the drawbacks of intellectual work, which is absorbing by nature.

According to Cassian, Abbat Isaac held as a very precious secret of the spiritual life—"received by tradition from the most ancient Fathers and only to be revealed to a small number of those who desire it with ardour"—the habit of repeating on every occasion the verse of the psalms, *Deus, in adjutorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina*, for the purpose of maintaining the soul in the presence and thought of God.

For what is necessary above everything is to live habitually in the presence of God.

"Pains beset me on every side, I have battles to sustain and tribulations to bear, if I do not place myself frequently and most carefully in the presence of God, so as to live always under his eye; there for me is the supreme good, elsewhere the extreme of misery." (Gerlac Peters).

II. PRÆBE MIHI COR TVVM

The more difficult conditions in which, other things being equal, people living in the world are placed with regard to the spiritual life and contemplation, should not discourage them. If they have not the helps and supports of religious rule or vows—if, living in the world, they find themselves constantly at their own disposal and in consequence of that liberty fall into a multitude of venial sins and imperfections—the life of prayer will give them precisely the grace to compensate by their interior fervour for what is wanting to them in the way of external support.

In order to redeem the insufficiencies and deficiencies of their life, they should

apply themselves above all—and their very imperfections will frequently suggest to them this exercise—to the practice of a profound and universal humility, throwing themselves into their own littleness, *in propriam parvitatem*. Doing what lies in their power, let them live a life of confiding abandonment to the mercy of God and his Providence. Let them constantly give thanks for the benefits they have received, thus practising the Apostle's precept: *Gaudete in Domino semper, iterum dico, gaudete;* so that inasmuch as every Christian should manifest in some manner the folly of the Cross, this complete and boundless confidence in God may be their own special folly.

They should also cultivate kindness towards all creatures and abstain from judging the souls of others while enlarging their own hearts sufficiently to admire and as far as possible to understand the freedom, the breadth and the variety of the ways of God. "*Quotidie quoque perdurantes in templo, et frangentes circa domos panem, sumebant cibum cum exsultatione et simplicitate cordis, collaudantes*

Deum, et habentes gratiam ad omnem plebem." (Act. Apost. ii, 46, 47.)

12. SI QVIS VVLT POST ME VENIRE,
ABNEGET SEMETIPSVM,
ET TOLLAT CRVCEM SVAM
ET SEQVATVR ME

Those who, remaining in the world, are unable to practise the counsels of perfection to the letter ought at least to practise them in a spiritual manner in the sense of "preparation of the soul." Looked at from this point of view the life of prayer offers to those who devote themselves to it in sincerity a certain spiritual participation in the life of the counsels.

The life of prayer demands principally three things: purity of heart, detachment, abandonment to Providence. *Purity of heart*, which cleanses the intelligence and the will from the imprint of created things, is a sort of *spiritual chastity* (II, ii, 151, 2); *detachment*, which causes us to make use of ourselves and created things "as if not using them," without claiming anything for ourselves, is a kind of *spiritual poverty; abandonment to Providence*, which causes us to cast

all our care on God and gives us up to his good pleasure, is like a *spiritual obedience*, which penetrates to the most intimate depth of the soul, and, while it makes us free of the whole created world, obliges us to depend in everything on the conduct of the Holy Spirit.[1]

He who arrives at this blessed state of dependence will gaily bear his cross and faithfully follow the Lord. He will live in his presence, he will always find him in the depths of himself—*tu es intus !*—and will adhere with his whole soul "*nudato intellectu et affectu*," to Him who is above all thought and who wishes us to transform us into himself by love.

[1] "The duties of each moment, under their baffling appearances, conceal the truth of the Divine Will." "They are, as it were, the sacrament of the present moment." De Caussade. (*Abandonment to Divine Providence.*)

III
NOTES

NOTE I

THE Blessed Trinity inhabits the soul by sanctifying grace, which renders us conformed to God and gives us the power to enjoy the Divine Persons themselves, *potestatem fruendi divina Persona* (I, 43, 3). The Father thus present in the soul sends her the Son and They both send her the Holy Spirit. An invisible mission, which takes place whenever the soul grows in grace, and above all when she enters a new order of the life of grace (43, 6 ad. 2). Since the Holy Spirit is love, the soul is more specially assimilated to Him through the Gift of charity. And it is by means of this Gift that the Spirit goes on His invisible mission (43, 5).

The soul is more specially conformed to the Son by the Gift of Knowledge—a Knowledge which bursts into love. For the Son is the Word, not any Word, but the Word which exhales Love. *Filius autem est Verbum, non qualecunque, sed spirans amorem. . . . Non igitur secundum quam libet perfectionem intellectus mittitur Filius, sed secundum talem instructionem intellectus, quâ prorumpat in affectionem amoris, ut dicitur Joan.* 6 : *Omnis qui audivit a Patre, et didicit venit ad me. Et in Ps.* 38 : *In meditatione mea exardescet ignis.* This is why, as S. Augustine ex-

pressly teaches, the Son is sent on an invisible mission, "when He is known and perceived"—that is, known in a manner in some way experimental, a grace belonging properly to Wisdom, which is a *tasting* knowledge" (43, 5). Thus contemplation, in so far as it is the act of Wisdom, is, as it were, the proper fruit of the mission of the Son, and in so far as it essentially depends on charity is the fruit of the mission of the Spirit. It is, in fact, an object of knowledge and love—not any sort of knowledge and love, but a knowledge and love of experience and fruition—that the Divine Persons inhabit the souls of the just, an experience and fruition that can only occur here below in the transluminous obscurity of living faith, thanks to the Gift of Wisdom and the Charity which it presupposes. (Cf. John of S. Thomas, *Curs. Theol.*, t. IV, q. XI, iii, disput. 17.)

NOTE II

It may be useful to reproduce here the text of S. John of the Cross, describing the symptoms which indicate the soul's entrance into the contemplative way.

"These symptoms, which are verified in personal experience, and mark the moment when discursive meditation may be abandoned, are three in number.

"First Symptom.—Meditation becomes impracticable, the imagination remains inert, the taste for meditation has disappeared, and the zest produced in the past by the object on which the imagination worked is changed into dryness. As long as zest persists and we can pass in meditation from one thought to another, meditation must not be abandoned until the moment when the soul experiences the peace and quietude which will be discussed when we are treating of the third symptom.

"Second Symptom.—We no longer feel any desire to fix our imagination or our senses on any particular object internal or external. I do not say that the imagination will not manifest itself by the restless movement proper to it—this may occur in the course of profound recollection—but the soul will have no desire to fix herself intentionally on any objects.

"THIRD SYMPTOM.—The most decisive symptom is this: the soul is happy to find herself alone with God, in a state of loving attention to him without any particular consideration of the mind, but with interior peace, quietude and repose, without any discursive acts or exercises of the powers of the memory, understanding or will. The soul is content with this general and loving knowledge and attention without any particular perception of anything else.

"The existence of these three symptoms should be verified conjointly before it is safe to attempt the abandonment of meditation based on sensible knowledge for entrance into spiritual contemplation." (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Ed. Crit. Toledo, 1912, Vol. I, bk. ii, ch. xi, p. 150.) S. John of the Cross gives the same teaching in *The Living Flame* (Str. III, verse 3).

We will quote the following lines.

"I wish to have no confusion as to what I think about the condition of beginners; meditation with its discursive acts in which the imagination plays its part are indispensable to them. This comes from the fact that the soul needs at that time some matter on which she can interiorly exercise herself, which allows her to find a comforting zest in spiritual things.

"By the very fact that the soul thus

nourishes her spiritual appetite, she digs up the roots of sensual affections and causes her desire to die to the habits of this world. But once that this spiritual appetite is more or less satisfied and that on the other hand the soul begins to perceive something of the savour of the Spirit, whence she draws a little strength and constancy, one may say that God begins to wean the soul and open to her the doors of a new state, that of contemplation. In the case of persons consecrated to the service of God this change often occurs fairly quickly, because owing to their renunciation of the world, their senses and spirit accommodate themselves more easily to the will of God. And at the same time that will operates more rapidly in them, because the only goal of their activity is spirituality. And when does this transition take place? When discursive acts and meditations resist the desires of the soul, when the fervours of early days have vanished. The soul becomes impotent, she finds it impossible to use her reasoning powers as before, the senses are dry and give her no more support. In these circumstances the soul should remain passive. She must now learn to receive, to let Another act in her." (Hoornaert's Trans., 1916.)

Infused contemplation begins with the passive recollection so admirably described

by S. Teresa in the *Fourth Mansion* (Interior Castle, ch. iii), where she shows the difference of this stage of prayer from the last acquired stage that has preceded it (which is the prayer of active recollection) described in *The Way of Perfection*, ch. xxviii.

NOTE III

It is necessary to insist on this point and to show how the teaching of S. John of the Cross, describing contemplation as a *non-activity* (*Living Flame*, Str. III, verse 3), and S. Thomas's doctrine, which defines contemplation as the highest activity (*Sum. Theol.* II, ii, q. 179, 180), differ only in appearance and in virtue of the point of view from which each of the great doctors is considering the same reality.

"The soul," says, for instance, S. John of the Cross, "should be attached to nothing, neither to the discursive exercise of meditation, nor to any *taste*, whether sensible or spiritual. All her activity should be suspended. What is necessary is that she should keep her spirit free and in a state of annihilation towards created things, for if she seeks by thought or reasoning or any attraction, she may feel a support for her own movement to lean; on the result can be nothing but obstacles and disturbance." (*Living Flame*, *loc. cit.*, p. 295.)

"Discursive exercise of meditation, any taste, thought, reasoning or attraction" which would furnish the soul with something to lean on in support of her own movement. It is clearly evident from this text that when S. John of the Cross

writes that *all activity in the soul should be suspended*, he is thinking of the human mode of action of our faculties and of their *particular operations*, because he is speaking from the point of view of mystical experience, and because from that point of view the suspension of all activity of the human mode can only be described by her as a non-activity. Contrariwise, when S. Thomas defines contemplation as the supreme activity of the soul, he places himself at a point of view which is no longer psychological, but ontological or metaphysical: and the activity of which he speaks, while it is indeed the highest activity of the soul, may well, precisely on account of its excessive spirituality and the superhuman mode of its exercise, fail to be perceived as activity at all by the soul. Thus the experimental language of S. John of the Cross is in perfect accordance with the theological language of S. Thomas. S. Thomas teaches that contemplation in itself is an operation of the intelligence ("*contemplatio habet quidem quietem ab exterioribus motibus; nihilominus tamen ipsum contemplari est quidam motus intellectus, prout quaelibet operatio dicitur motus*" (II, ii, q. 179, 1 ad. 3)), but of the nature of repose and immobility in the image of the divine operation itself—it is only called *movement*

(II, ii. q. 179, 1 ad. 3), and if the movements of intelligible operations are related to the repose of contemplation (180, 603), it is in a preparatory way leading up to the term which is the immobility of the gaze fixed on God symbolised by the *circular movement* of Denys (*ibid.* ad 3); moreover, it is an operation which excludes from its pure essence the multiplicity of discursive operations ("*contemplatio pertinet ad ipsum simplicem intuitum veritatis*" (180. 3 ad 1); "*ut scilicet cessante discurseu figatur intuitus animae . . . et in sola Dei contemplatione persistat*" (180, 6 ad 2)); and which, coming into the soul from the Gift of Wisdom, supposes that the soul, passive under the action of God, acts without moving itself and as the instrument of the Holy Spirit (I, ii, 68, 3 ad 2).

It may further be remarked that in the article in which he distinguishes between operating and co-operating Grace (I, ii, q. 111. a. 2), S. Thomas formulates a general principle which constitutes the first theological root of S. John of the Cross's doctrine on the passivity of the soul under the divine action.

"There are," he says, "certain effects of grace in which our soul is moved without moving herself, being moved solely by God; and in this case grace is said to be

operating, while on those occasions, when our soul is moved while at the same time moving herself, the operation is attributed not only to God but to the soul as well, and grace is said to be *co-operating*. The interior act of the will, i.e. the first act to which it cannot move itself in virtue of a previous act (I, ii, 9, 3), belongs to the first category of effects; in this act the will behaves as if moved, God being the mover, particularly when the will begins to will the good, having previously willed evil . . ."

In the same way we must say that infused contemplation is—acting under an eminent "operating" grace—a vital, free, and meritorious act, in which, however, the soul behaves as "being moved, not moving herself" (God alone moving her); that this *act*, though without the perfect fixity of the Beatific Vision, which will be "measured by eternity," is nevertheless a sort of *repose* in the Last End experimentally known and tasted by anticipation in the obscurity of Faith, which in this way resembles the essentially active repose that is the proper characteristic of the Pure Act, God.

Do we look for some indication of the supra-human mode of action which contemplation supposes in the intelligence? It is to be found precisely in the fact of an

activity not only simple and immobile, but which (because its object is disproportioned to the natural mode of apprehension of every created intelligence) subsists without perceiving anything distinct, "consists in receiving" (S. John of the Cross, *Living Flame*, III, 3), and for that reason remains inaccessible and unperceived, as an activity, itself. It already absolutely surpasses the human mode of the intelligence's activity, that it should act only passively under the movement of the Holy Spirit, that "it should remain in silence, *aux écoutes*" in a state of liberty, of docility to love, of "sovereign tranquility" and of attention in order to receive (itself having been received first of all) without laying hold of anything by the mode of action natural to it, and that it should thus advance by means of love, in the night of Faith, conquered by the incomprehensibility of God. "Do not say then: Oh! I am sure that the soul makes no progress, for she does nothing! Granted that she does nothing. But while admitting that, I can prove to you that in doing nothing she does a great deal. I affirm that if the soul empties herself of all particular subjects of knowledge, whether natural or spiritual, she makes progress, and the more the understanding of particular things and acts of the reason diminish, the more the

reason raises itself to the Sovereign and supernatural good." (S. John of the Cross, *Living Flame*, III, 3.)

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